



Domestic Violence

Domestic violence may be physical or emotional: slapping, punching, beating, kicking, threats of harm and verbal abuse are all forms of domestic violence. Violent behavior toward others is wrong no matter who does it. Family members are not excused. If you are in an abusive situation and don't do something to stop it, you may be harming your family. There is evidence that children raised in abusive homes are likely to become abusers or victims of abuse in later life.

What is Domestic Violence Under the Law?

Physical Abuse Against You. The legal definition of domestic violence includes: causing you physical harm (hitting, kicking, slapping, throwing things, etc.) or threatening physical harm (with or without a weapon), coercing you to do something or refrain from doing something by threats or use of force, harassing you (causing emotional distress by lingering at your home, peering in windows, following you, etc.), forcing or attempting to force you to engage in any sexual act, or holding you against your will.

Emotional Abuse. Domestic violence also includes placing a party in fear of imminent serious bodily harm by threat of force. This includes threats of violence; or other conduct that would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress, like "I will hit you", "if you leave, I will hurt you," or "if you tell anyone, I will kill you," so long as the act actually causes substantial emotional distress.

Child Abuse. The law provides for protection against violence toward children as well. Child abuse is any physical injury, sexual abuse or emotional harm inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by an adult household member. This includes sexual abuse of children, such as fondling or rape. The abused children need not be the children of the abuser in order for you to file a child abuse petition. The law does, however, exempt discipline administered in a reasonable manner.

How Does the Law Protect Against Domestic Violence?

You can file for CIVIL RELIEF in the civil courts if you are:

- The spouse or former spouse of the abuser;
- Being stalked or harassed by any person;
- Have a child in common with the abuser;
- The current or former live-in girlfriend or boyfriend of the abuser; or
- Related by blood or marriage to the abuser.

You **should** file a CHILD PROTECTION ORDER if:

- You suspect child abuse is occurring.

You can bring CRIMINAL CHARGES if:

- You have suffered violence in an abusive relationship, regardless of whether you are married to or living with the abuser.

Source: The Missouri Bar

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Missouri Domestic Violence Statistics

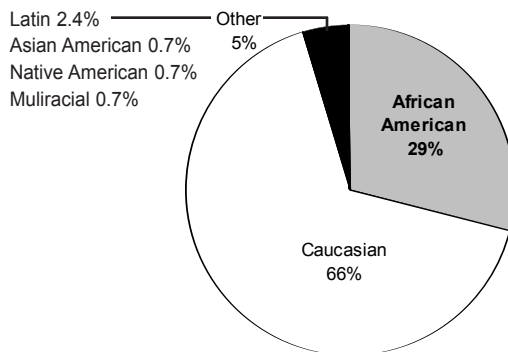
According to the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence (MCADV), approximately 6% more battered women and 8% more of their children were sheltered in 2000 as compared with 1999, according to data voluntarily submitted by 50 MCADV member programs that provide emergency shelter and other services to victims of domestic violence. In addition, more than 7,000 individuals received a wide range of non-residential services at no charge from MCADV member programs in 2000.

MCADV member programs provided non-residential services to 4,985 women, 1,811 children and 343 men in 2000.

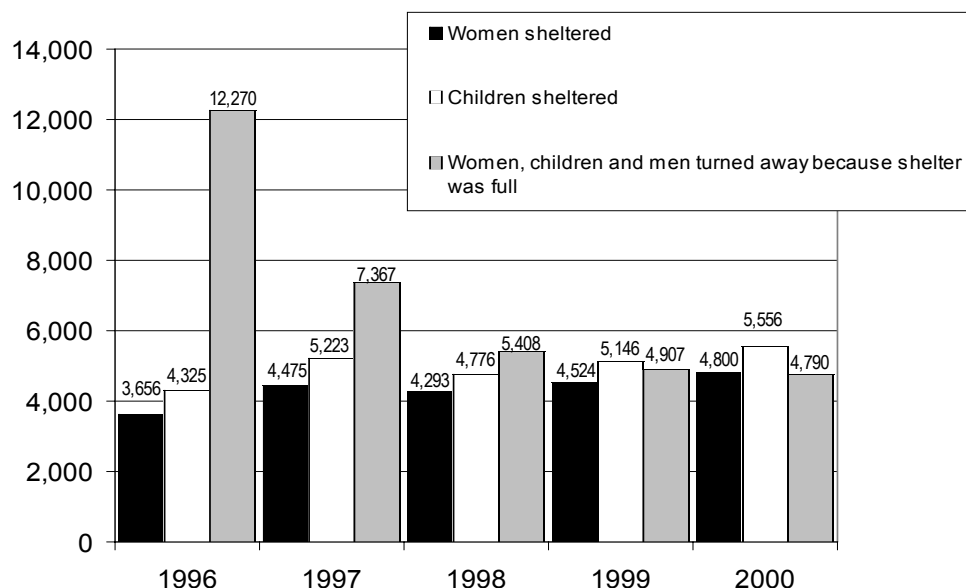
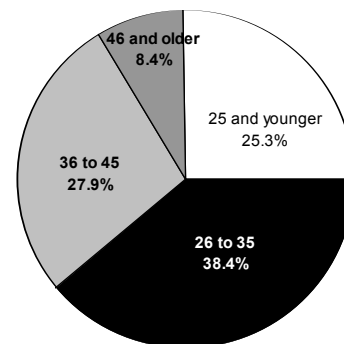
MCADV member programs provided 26,130 bed nights of long-term transitional housing to 107 women and 153 children in 2000.

MCADV member programs provided 54 bed nights of emergency shelter for men in 2000.

Ethnicity of women sheltered in 2000



Ages of women sheltered in 2000



Reported incidents of domestic violence continue to decline in Missouri

The Missouri State Highway Patrol annually compiles incidents of domestic violence, whether an arrest is made or not, from statistics voluntarily submitted by law enforcement agencies in the state. Nationally, the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that about half of the incidents of intimate partner violence experienced by women are reported to the police.

